

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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P 122000Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3706

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 KINGSTON 0194

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EFIN, PFOR, JM, US
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PATTERSON

1. SUMMARY. I PAID A FIFTEEN MINUTE COURTESY CALL ON NEW FONMIN, P.J. PATTERSON, JANUARY 12 AS PART OF TIGHT SCHEDULE INVOLVING CALLS BY ENTIRE RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC CORPS DURING DAY. DESPITE UNSUITABLE TIME-FRAME, A USEFUL DISCUSSION OF US CONCERNS, INCLUDING REJECTION OF IMF AND ANTI-US RHETORIC TOOK PLACE. END SUMMARY.

2. PATTERSON EXPRESSED THNAKS FOR LETTER OF CONGRATULATIONS HE RECEIVED FROM SECRETARY KISSINGER AND INQUIRED WHEN SECRETARY VANCE WOULD ACTUALLY TAKE OVER. HE WAS APPARENTLY UNDER IMPRESSION THAT CONFIRMATION HEARINGS WOULD TAKE PLACE AFTER JANUARY 20. I TOLD HIM THEY WERE TAKING PLACE NOW AND THAT, IN VIEW OF MR. VANCE'S OUTSTANDING QUALIFICATIONS, I ANTICIPATED A UNANIMOUS CONFIRMATION BY SENATE.

3. HE INQUIRED ABOUT MR. ROGERS AND I OUTLINED THE CHANGES IN DEPARTMENT HIERARCHY SO FAR ANNOUNCED, POINTING OUT THAT, WHILE NO CHANGE HAD YET BEEN RE-

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LEASED REGARDING ARA, CONTINUITY WOULD IN ANY CASE BE ASSURED BY CONTINUED PRESENCE OF MR. HABIB, WHO HAD ALWAYS SHOWN A KEEN INTEREST IN CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS IN GENERAL AND JAMAICAN AFFAIRS IN PARTICULAR. I ALSO SAID THAT WHILE I WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THE EXPRESSED INTEREST OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS, IT MIGHT NOT BE WISE TO HAVE TOO HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS WHICH MIGHT FLOW FROM THIS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF SERIOUS CONCERNS WE CURRENTLY HAD.

4. MINISTER SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT ATTITUDES DID NOT CHANGE OVERNIGHT, BUT WHAT WERE THE CONCERNS? I SAID THAT WE HAD A NUMBER, INCLUDING A LONG PERIOD OF ANTI-US RHETORIC CULMINATING IN AGEE VISIT AND THANKED HIM AT THIS POINT FOR HIS EFFORTS A YEAR AGO TO COOL IT (IN WHICH I THINK HE WAS BRIEFLY SUCCESSFUL) AND THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE APPARENT DECISION BY HIS GOVERNMENT NOT TO ACCEDE TO THE IMF RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE ECONOMY IN ORDER TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF IMF SUPPORT FACILITIES, THUS COMMITTING THEMSELVES TO AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT ROUTE OF AUSTERITY, THE SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE OF WHICH WAS IN DOUBT.

5. PATTERSON SAID THAT, WHILE THE FINAL DECISION HAD NOT YET BEEN MADE, HE FELT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONVINCED THAT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE IMF WERE TOO ONEROUS AND NOT POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE. HE SAID THAT DEVALUATION, FOR INSTANCE, WOULD WORK A REAL HARDSHIP ON POOR AND THAT PRICE OF FOOD WOULD IMMEDIATELY GO UP. HE SAID THAT THEY WERE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE STRINGENT AND UNPALATABLE MEASURES IN ANY CASE, BUT THAT "IF THEY WENT THE IMF ROUTE THERE WAS NO LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL," WHEREAS IF THEY DID IT ON THEIR OWN THERE WAS.

6. I COMMENTED THAT, WHILE I WAS UNAWARE OF THE DETAILED TERMS OF THE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE IMF TO DATE,
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IT WAS NOT MY IMPRESSION THAT THEY INFRINGED IN ANY WAY ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE COUNTRY OR INTERFERED IN WHAT WERE ESSENTIALLY INTERNAL POLITICAL DECISIONS; THAT, FOR EXAMPLE THE IMF MIGHT REQUIRE A BALANCED BUDGE THAT THAT THE METHOD OF ARRIVING AT IT WAS UP TO THE COUNTRY CONCERNED AND DID NOT INVOLVE THE CURTAILMENT OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED IMPERATIVE, AS HAD BEEN ALLEGED. THE MERITS AND DEMERITS OF DEVALUATION COULD BE ARGUED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS AND ECONOMISTS DID NOT ALWAYS AGREE, BUT IT DEALT PRIMARILY WITH A SYMPTOM RATHER THAN PROVIDING A CURE. FURTHERMORE, IF IMPORTS WERE RESTRICTED TO THE EXTENT APPARENTLY NECESSARY, FOOD PRICES WERE LIABLE IN ANY CASE TO BECOME INFLATED. FINALLY, I THOUGHT THAT REJECTION OF THE IMF WOULD DELAY THE TIME AT WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL BANKING COMMUNITY AND OTHERS COULD BE OF ASSISTANCE TO JAMAICA, EVEN ASSUMING THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR GO-IT-ALONE ROUTE.

7. THE MINISTER LISTENED POLITELY AND THEN SAID THAT WHAT CONSTITUTED POLITICAL DECISIONS WAS SUBJECT TO DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS, AND THEIRS WAS THAT THE IMF TERMS WERE NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THE COURSE THEY FELT THEY MUST FOLLOW. I SAID THAT I COULD UNDERSTAND THIS IF THERE WERE SOME OTHER SOURCE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT, TO WHICH REMARK THE MINISTER DID NOT RESPOND OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT THE IMF FACILITY WAS ONLY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS, AND THIS WAS INADEQUATE TO DO THE JOB ANYWAY.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 KINGSTON 0194

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR

8. PATTERSON SAID THAT HE HOPED WE COULD HAVE A FURTHER DISCUSSION IN EARLY FEBRUARY REGARDING THE US-JAMAICAN RELATIONSHIP WHEN THERE WOULD BE MORE TIME TO REVIEW IT IN DETAIL BUT THAT IF IN THE MEANWHILE THERE WERE ANY MATTERS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION HE WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE ME.

9. COMMENT: I BELIEVE PATTERSON WILL IN MANY WAYS BE AN EASIER MAN TO DEAL WITH THAN HIS PREDECESSOR, DUDLEY THOMPSON, BUT PATTERSON IS PROBABLY TOUGHER IN THAT HIS CONVICTIONS ARE LESS FACILE AND DEEPER. HE IS CERTAINLY MORE THOUGHTFUL, SERIOUS, CONTROLLED AND RATIONAL, POSSIBLY MORE PRAGMATIC THAN DOCTRINAIRE, AND I RATE HIM HIGH IN INTELLIGENCE AND SENSITIVITY. HE HAS A LOT OF PRESENCE AND DIGNITY AS WELL AS A SOUND POLITICAL BASE. SO FAR, HE HAS BEEN INTENSELY LOYAL TO MANLEY, BUT I REGARD HIM AS A LEADING CANDIDATE FOR SUCCESSION IF THE PRIME MINISTER FALTERS OR BOWS OUT. SO FAR AS THE

SUBSTANTIVE SUBJECTS OF DISCUSSION ARE CONCERNED, IT SEEMS
INCRESINGLY CLEAR THAT THE GOJ HAS MADE A FIRM IMMEDIATE
DECISION REGARDING THE IMF FACILITY BUT THAT THIS DOES
NOT NECESSARILY CLOSE OUT HOPE FOR DOWN-THE-ROAD
COOPERATION UNLESS THE LOCAL SCENARIO TURNS OUT TO BE
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MORE "SCIENTIFIC" THAN "DEMOCRATIC." WHILE OUR OWN
ROOM FOR MANEUVER MAY BE LIMITED AT PRESENT AND IS
DEFINITELY NARROWING, IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO FORE-
CLOSE THE POSSIBILITY OF A SATISFACTORY BILATERAL
WORKING RELATIONSHIP. HOWEVER, TO OFFER ANYTHING FURTHER
THAN CONCERNED SYMPATHY TOGETHER WITH CONTINUED LOW-
LEVEL HUMANITARIAN AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RIGHT NOW
WOULD NOT, I FIRMLY BELIEVE, BE IN OUR SHORT OR LONG
TERM INTEREST, EVEN IF IT WERE BUREAUCRATICALLY AND
CONGRESSIONALLY POSSIBLE. THERE IS TOO MUCH WATER YET TO
GO UNDER THE BRIDGE.
GERARD

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